

WASHINGTON –Today, the Committee on House Administration, led by Chairman Robert Brady, D-Pa., and Ranking Republican Vernon Ehlers, R-Mich., heard from witnesses expressing the need to integrate Congressional and Capitol Guide Service staff for Capitol Tours before the anticipated November 2008 opening of the Capitol Visitor Center.

Witnesses, including U.S. Capitol Police Chief, Phillip Morse, testified to the security enhancements that would result from the integration of Capitol tours. “The concept of staff integrated tours led by a member of the Capitol Guide Service will allow the United States Capitol Police to better regulate the flow of visitors into the Capitol thereby eliminating overcrowding and congestion in the hallways,” Morse stated. “Police will provide training to the tour guides that include evacuation routes and procedures, assembly areas outside of the Capitol, familiarization with building lockdown procedures, and areas within the building to relocate groups in response to various threats.”

The Chief Executive Officer of Visitor Services for the Capitol Visitor Center, Terrie Rouse, not only reiterated the security benefits, but also testified to the educational enhancements of integrating the tours stating, “we believe we will serve Members of Congress better by integrating, not eliminating, the staff-facilitated functions into the tour program.”

Ranking Republican Vern Ehlers acknowledged some of the concerns raised by Members. “I fully understand the concerns my colleagues have about servicing their constituents’ requests for Capitol tours,” Ehlers stated. “I want to assure them that we expect this new proposal we are considering will enhance the tour experience of their constituents, while continuing to include Member’s staff in the tours. We believe this will improve the unique opportunities for Members’ visitors while continuing the participation of Congressional staff.”

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.